

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) Department Of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Minority Business Opportunity Center Program (Louisiana)

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA): 11.803 Minority Business Opportunity Center Program (Formerly Minority Business Opportunity Committee Program)

Funding Opportunity Description:

In accordance with Executive Order 11625 and 15 U.S.C. Section 1512, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is soliciting applications from organizations to operate a Minority Business Opportunity Center (MBOC) (formerly Minority Business Opportunity Committees) in the state of Louisiana. The Minority Business Opportunity Center through its staff will provide brokering services and assistance to minority business enterprises (MBEs) that (a) generate \$500,000 or more in annual gross revenues; (b) are capable of creating significant employment and long-term economic impact (commonly referred to as "rapid growth-potential" MBEs); or (c) have been displaced from Louisiana due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The MBOC will provide access to buyers of goods and services and procurement and financing opportunities within the public and private sectors. In addition, the MBOC will assist clients by identifying, matching and fostering strategic partners and joint ventures with firms outside the designated service area in order to build client capacity. The MBOC operator and executive director should have experience in and knowledge of the local minority business sector and established working relationships with buying organizations. The MBOC is supported by a volunteer advisory committee that assists the MBOC in implementing program requirements and providing contract and financing opportunities to MBEs. The program is primarily evaluated by MBDA based on the number and dollar value of contracts and financial transactions awarded to minority business enterprises. The MBOC will be required to engage in the activities delineated in this Announcement.

Funding Locations:

MBDA is soliciting competitive applications from organizations to operate one MBOC in the geographic area identified below. The maximum Federal Funding Amount for each year is also shown below. The MBOC is expected to comply with the cost share requirements set forth in section V.A.4.

Applicant Location	Federal Amount Year 1 (June 1, 2006 – May 31, 2007)	Federal Amount Year 2 (June 1, 2007 – May 31, 2008)
1. Louisiana	\$415,000	\$260,000

MBOC applicants should have an established presence in the state of Louisiana. Established presence is defined to mean that the applicant has had an office in the location for a minimum of three (3) years preceding the date of this Announcement and has established working relationships with buying organizations. In light of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the definition for established presence is amended to include entities in operation since the beginning of 2003 (minimum) through August 2005. Applicants are encouraged to propose as large a service area as possible, which may extend beyond the defined area as noted above.

Applicants will be required to operate a primary MBOC office in the City of New Orleans, Louisiana. Applicants are encouraged to propose a secondary or satellite office(s) accessible to residents of Baton Rouge, LA. Additional preference may be given to applicants proposing a secondary or satellite office(s).

Applicants should include a description for using an intra and interstate approach, depending on the geographic service area, for accomplishing the work requirements. Staffing should be appropriate to accomplish the work requirements. Evaluation criteria used by MBDA to select applicants for the MBOC include the following in the applicant's defined service area: 1) the size of the minority population, 2) the density of MBEs with annual revenues of at least \$500,000 or with rapid-growth potential or displaced Louisiana MBEs due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, 3) the presence of significant federal and commercial contracting and financing opportunities, 4) the size of the market, and 5) the need for MBDA resources. The location identified above was chosen based on MBDA's desire to seek applications from large, medium, and small markets, the demographics related to MBE populations, the need for federal intervention strategies in rebuilding the Hurricane impacted areas, the overall budget for the MBOC program, and availability of contracting and financing opportunities.

Additional preference may be given to applications focused on: 1) specific industries or industry clusters including, but not limited to, aerospace, manufacturing, construction, financial services, IT, and /or automotive industries; 2) the ability to assist in economic recovery following natural disasters through available economic opportunities; and 3) the ability to facilitate joint ventures and strategic partnerships between clients and firms outside of the designated service area. All applications including those that are industry-focused must be structured in accordance with the guidelines contained in this Announcement. Preference may also be given to applicants that have an existing or recent client base that can be utilized for brokering contract and financial transactions. Applicants must demonstrate in their proposals that existing and/or former client bases will be used in furtherance of MBOC program objectives. Applicants are encouraged to review the definition of Harvesting contained in the "Definitions and Clarifications" section of this Announcement.

Funding Levels and Time Period

Funding levels will be \$415,000 (year 1) and \$260,000 (year 2) (subject to availability of FY 2007 appropriations) for the Federal amount for the two year award period. MBDA anticipates that 75 percent of the Federal funding available shall be allocated to key staff, such as the Executive Director and Senior Business Development person(s). The MBOC may charge client fees for brokering services rendered. Client fees applied directly to the award's cost sharing

requirement must be used in furtherance of the program objectives. (See Section I.D.2.d for examples of brokering services for which a fee may be charged.)

MBDA anticipates that applications will be processed within forty-five (45) days from the date of publication of this Announcement, with an approximate award start date of June 1, 2006. Awards will be Cooperative Agreements issued by the Department of Commerce Grants Officer. Awardees will be eligible for one continuation period, for a total of two years.

Eligible Applicants and Client Base

For-profit entities (including sole-proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations), and non-profit organizations, state and local government entities, American Indian Tribes, and educational institutions are eligible to operate MBOCs.

MBOCs serve African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Spanish-speaking Americans, Aleuts, Asian Pacific Americans, Asian Americans, Asian Indians, Native Americans, Eskimos and Hasidic Jews.

Dates/Application Submission:

The closing date for receipt of application is **May 11, 2006**. Completed applications must be received by MBDA **no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time** at the address below for paper submission or at www.Grants.gov for electronic submission. The due date and time is the same for electronic submissions as it is for paper submissions. The date that applications will be deemed to have been submitted electronically shall be the date and time received at Grants.gov. Applicants should save and print the proof of submission they receive from Grants.gov. Applications received after the closing date and time will not be considered. Anticipated time for processing is forty-five (45) days from the date of publication of this notice.

Addresses:

1 a) Paper Submission – If Mailed: If the application is mailed/shipped overnight by the applicant or its representative, one (1) signed original plus two (2) copies of the application must be submitted. Completed application packages must be mailed to:

Office of Business Development – MBOC Program
Office of Executive Secretariat, HCHB, Room 5063
Minority Business Development Agency
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

U.S. Department of Commerce delivery policies for Federal Express, UPS, and DHL overnight services require the packages to be sent to the address above.

1 b) Paper Submission – If Hand-Delivered: If the application is hand-delivered by the applicant or his/her representative, one (1) signed original plus two (2) copies of the application must be delivered to:

U.S. Department of Commerce
MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
Office of Business Development – MBOC Program (extension 1940)
HCHB, Room 1874
Entrance #10
15th Street, NW
Washington, DC
(Between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues)

U.S. Department of Commerce “hand-delivery” policies state that Federal Express, UPS, and DHL overnight services submitted to the address listed above (Entrance #10) cannot be accepted. These policies should be taken into consideration when utilizing their services. MBDA will not accept applications that are submitted by the deadline but rejected due to Departmental hand-delivery policies. The applicant must adhere to these policies in order for his/her application to receive consideration for award.

2) Electronic Submission: Applicants are encouraged to submit their proposal electronically at <http://www.Grants.gov>. Electronic submissions should be made in accordance with the instructions available at Grants.gov (see <http://www.Grants.gov/ForApplicants> for detailed information). MBDA strongly recommends that applicants not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

Application Forms and Package – Paper Submission

A completed proposal submitted by mail/overnight delivery, or hand delivery must have the following sections:

- Program Narrative (for both funding periods);
- Budget and Budget Narrative (one for each funding period);
- Standard Forms 424; 424A; 424B; and SF LLL (if applicable);
- Department of Commerce forms CD-346 (for key individuals); CD-511; and
- Attachments (including but not limited to: business organization documents, resumes, official transcripts for project director, position descriptions, letters of support, signed commitment letters from proposed key staff and in-kind contributors, etc.)

Failure to include, by the deadline, a signed, original SF-424 with the paper application will result in the application being rejected and returned to the applicant. Failure to sign and submit the REMAINING FORMS with the paper application by the deadline will automatically cause an application to lose two (2) points in the overall score. Failure to submit other documents or information required may also adversely affect an applicant's overall score. MBDA shall not accept any changes, additions, revisions or deletions to competitive applications after the closing date for receiving applications, except through a formal negotiation process. MBDA may contact applicants for additional clarifications.

Application Forms and Package – Electronic Submission

A completed proposal submitted electronically consists of the following sections:

- Program Narrative (for both funding periods);
- Budget and Budget Narrative (one for each funding period);
- Standard Forms 424; 424A; 424B; and SF LLL (if applicable);
- Department of Commerce Form CD-511;
- Department of Commerce form CD-346 (for key individuals) (Note: The CD-346 is not available within the Grants.gov application package. However, it can be found at www.doc.gov/forms. The form can be completed and attached to the application. An original signature copy of the CD-346 will be required before an award will be made to the successful applicant.); and
- Attachments (including but not limited to: business organization documents, resumes, official transcripts for project director, position descriptions, letters of support, signed commitment letters from proposed key staff and in-kind contributors, CD-346, as described above, etc.)

The preferred format for electronic attachments is .pdf. Files in this format may be read by practically any computer using free reader software. This is the most prevalent format for documents that are scanned from hard-copy. However, the Department will accept electronic files in Word, Wordperfect, Lotus or Excel formats as well.

Failure to include, by the deadline, a complete application as described above, will result in the application being rejected by Grants.gov. [Note: An electronic application cannot be submitted at Grants.gov unless all required fields on all required forms are completed.] Failure to submit other documents or information by the deadline, which does not result in the rejection of an application by Grants.gov, may affect an applicant's overall score. MBDA shall not accept any changes, additions, revisions or deletions to competitive applications after the closing date for receiving applications, except through a formal negotiation process, which may include allowing more time due to system problems at Grants.gov beyond the control of the applicant. MBDA may contact applicants for additional clarifications.

The electronic submission date is the date that applications will be deemed to have been submitted electronically and shall be the date and time received at www.grants.gov. Applicants should save and print the proof of submission they receive from www.grants.gov. The due date and time is the same for electronic submission as it is for hard-copy submissions. Applicants should plan to submit electronically several days before the deadline. Doing so will help them to ensure that the applicant is completed before submitting online.

Additional Information and Contact: For further information, please visit MBDA's Minority Business Internet Portal at www.mbda.gov. Paper applications and standard forms may be obtained by contacting the MBDA National Enterprise Center (NEC) for the area in which the applicant is located (See section VII Agency Contacts). Forms 424, 424A, 424B, and SF-LLL can also be obtained at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants, or <http://www.grants.gov>. Forms CD-511, and CD-346 may be obtained at www.doc.gov/forms.

Responsibility for ensuring that applications are complete and received BY MBDA on time is the sole responsibility of the Applicant.

Pre-Application Conference: A pre-application teleconference will be held in connection with this solicitation. Notice of the pre-application conference will be available on MBDA's Portal (MBDA Portal) at www.mbda.gov. Interested parties to the pre-application conference must register at least 24 hours in advance of the event. Please visit the MBDA Portal for registration instructions. For additional information, contact the MBDA National Enterprise Center in the geographic service area in which the project will be located (see Section VII for the listing of MBDA Regions and Contacts). Parties interested in attending the pre-application conference in person at a National Enterprise Center must also register with the corresponding NEC. Please note that picture identification is required for entry into any Federal building.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. BACKGROUND / PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In accordance with Executive Order 11625 and 15 U.S.C. Section 1512, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is soliciting applications from organizations to operate a Minority Business Opportunity Center (MBOC) (formerly Minority Business Opportunity Committee). The Minority Business Opportunity Center through its staff will provide brokering services and assistance to MBEs that (a) generate \$500,000 or more in annual gross revenues; (b) are capable of creating significant employment and long-term economic impact (commonly referred to as “rapid growth-potential” MBEs); or (c) have been displaced from Louisiana due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The MBOC will provide access to buyers of goods and services and procurement and financing opportunities within the public and private sectors. The MBOC program’s primary objective is to match pre-qualified MBEs with private and public sector contracting and financing entities. In addition, the MBOC will assist clients by identifying, matching and fostering strategic partners and joint ventures with firms outside the designated service area in order to build client capacity.

The MBOC operator and executive director must have experience in and knowledge of the local minority business sector and demonstrated ability to gain access to key decision makers. The MBOC is supported by a volunteer advisory committee that assists the MBOC in implementing program requirements and providing contract and financing opportunities to MBEs. The program is primarily evaluated by MBDA based on the number and dollar value of contracts and financial transactions awarded to MBEs. The MBOC will be required to engage in the activities delineated in this Announcement. The MBOC Executive Director, the Advisory Committee, MBOC Staff, and MBOC Chairperson are critical to the program’s overall success. The following are their minimal requirements:

1. MBOC Executive Director and Key Staff

The MBOC Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the MBOC, including the satisfaction of all program work requirements (as specified in Section D, below) on behalf of the successful applicant. This individual must be on-board within 30 days of award. The Executive Director and one other key staff person such as the procurement and finance specialist must be dedicated one hundred percent (100%) to managing and implementing the program. Key staff must have significant experience in brokering of contracts and financings as well as the ability to coach and mentor MBEs.

2. The MBOC Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee provides advice to the Executive Director on ways to accomplish the work requirements and program implementation. The Advisory Committee, a volunteer group, is typically comprised of business and industry leaders, federal, state, and local governmental representatives that conduct substantial purchasing and/or engage in significant financial transactions. The Advisory Committee is expected to play an active role in providing and

identifying business opportunities, which can be brokered by the MBOC for MBEs. Advisory committee members are encouraged to coach and mentor MBEs.

3. MBOC Chairperson

The Chairperson should be a senior executive who is willing to serve, in a volunteer capacity, as chairperson for two years. In addition to conducting outreach activities, the Chairperson shall provide guidance and advice on ways to engage the local business communities in MBOC activities. The MBOC Chairperson works closely with the Executive Director to obtain the participation of senior executives on the Advisory Committee and in MBOC programs. Previous MBOC Chairpersons have included the President and Chief Executive Officer of a major food manufacturer, and the President and Chief Executive Officer of a “Fortune 100” company.

B. FUNDING LOCATIONS

MBDA is soliciting competitive applications from organizations to operate one MBOC in the geographic area identified below. The maximum Federal Funding Amount for each year is also shown below. The MBOC is expected to comply with the cost share requirements set forth in section V.A.4.

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Applicants will be required to operate a primary MBOC office in the City of New Orleans, Louisiana. Applicants are encouraged to propose a secondary or satellite office(s) accessible to residents of Baton Rouge, LA. Additional preference may be given to applicants proposing a secondary or satellite office(s).

Applicants should include a description for using an intra and interstate approach, depending on the geographic service area, for accomplishing the work requirements. Staffing should be appropriate to accomplish the work requirements. Evaluation criteria used by MBDA to select applicants for the MBOC include the following in the applicant’s defined service area: 1) the size of the minority population, 2) the density of MBEs with annual revenues of at least \$500,000 or with rapid-growth potential or displaced Louisiana MBEs due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, 3) the presence of significant federal and commercial contracting and financing

opportunities, 4) the size of the market, and 5) the need for MBDA resources. The locations identified above were chosen based on MBDA's desire to seek applications from large, medium, and small markets, the demographics related to MBE populations, the need for federal intervention strategies in rebuilding the Hurricane impacted areas, the overall budget for the MBOC program, and availability of contracting and financing opportunities.

Additional preference may be given to applications focused on: 1) specific industries or industry clusters including, but not limited to, aerospace, manufacturing, construction, financial services, IT, and /or automotive industries; 2) the ability to assist in economic recovery following natural disasters through available economic opportunities; and 3) the ability to facilitate joint ventures and strategic partnerships between clients and firms outside of the designated service area. All applications including those that are industry-focused must be structured in accordance with the guidelines contained in this Announcement. Preference may also be given to applicants that have an existing or recent client base that can be utilized for brokering contract and financial transactions. Applicants must demonstrate in their proposals that existing and/or former client bases will be used in furtherance of MBOC program objectives. Applicants are encouraged to review the definition of Harvesting contained in the "Definitions and Clarifications" section of this Announcement.

C. FUNDING PRIORITIES

Preference may be given to applications during the selection process which address the following MBDA funding priorities:

1. Having an existing or recent client base that can be used for brokering contract and financial transactions. Applicants must demonstrate in their proposals that existing and/or former client bases will be used in furtherance of MBOC program objectives. ***Applicants are encouraged to review the definition of Harvesting contained in the "Definitions and Clarifications" section of this Announcement.***
2. Having the ability to establish an MBOC that has industry specific focus and that demonstrates the utility of economic clusters including, but not limited to, aerospace, manufacturing, construction, financial services, IT and /or automotive industries.
3. Having the ability to assist in economic recovery following natural disasters through available economic opportunities.
4. Having the ability to facilitate joint ventures and strategic partnerships between clients and firms outside of the designated service area.

D. WORK REQUIREMENTS

The work requirements specify the duties and responsibilities necessary to successfully implement the MBOC program. The successful applicant is responsible for the performance and delivery of the work requirements. A detailed work plan with time lines broken into quarterly goals is required for all work requirements and should reflect how the applicant intends to implement the activities. Applicants seeking to take advantage of the funding priority preferences should include a discussion of such priorities in their detailed work plans.

1. Establish the MBOC Office

The primary MBOC office must be opened in the City of New Orleans and be operational within thirty (30) days after receipt of the award. If the applicant proposes a secondary or satellite office(s) accessible to residents of Baton Rouge, such office(s) must also be opened and operational within thirty (30) days of receipt of the award. Fully operational means that all staff has been hired, all required signs are up, all items of furniture and equipment (e.g., hardware, software, Internet services, phones, faxes, etc.) are in place, and the MBOC is fully ready to conduct business. MBOC offices must contain enough space to conduct meetings and receive public and private sector executives in an appropriate setting.

The MBOC office must be accessible to disabled persons and strategically located to serve MBEs. The applicant must ensure that the office is (1) close to the available public and private sector resources, and (2) within a reasonable commuting distance to the minority business community.

2. Facilitate the Award of Contract and Financial Transactions to MBEs

The successful applicant must implement a process that results in the award of contract and financial transactions to MBE clients. To accomplish this objective, there are four primary functional areas of responsibility that must be executed:

- Maintenance and Data Integration of a Database/Listing of Viable MBEs,
- Maintenance and Data Integration of a Database/Listing of Potential Contract and Financial Opportunities,
- Establish Client Relationships, and,
- Brokering of Contract and Financial Transactions for award to MBE clients.

a. Maintenance and Data Integration of a Database/Listing containing Viable MBEs

The successful applicant should have an existing database/listing of MBEs with annual revenues of at least \$500,000 or with rapid-growth potential or displaced Louisiana MBEs due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The contents of this database should be utilized to match MBEs with key decision makers in the public and private sectors that have the ability to influence and/or consummate financial transactions. The database/listing should contain at a minimum the name of the principal(s); address, phone number, and email; ethnicity; business start date; primary type of business; number of full and part time employees, and gross annual sales. The applicant agrees to import this data into MBDA's Phoenix system or MBE Contact Database for the purpose of sharing MBE information used within the MBDA network (The Phoenix system is a database of firms capable of selling goods and services to the public and private sectors. Phoenix firms are eligible to be matched with procurement opportunities through a matching system called "Opportunities."). Additionally, the applicant agrees to maintain the information they enter into MBDA Applications. Alternatively, if the applicant does not have an existing database containing viable MBE information, the applicant will actively populate data into

MBDA's Phoenix system and the MBE Contact Database. The MBOC will ensure that entities entered into Phoenix and other MBDA Applications are valid and regularly maintained (See section E, Technology Tools). Activities of the successful applicant may include, *but are not limited to*:

- (1) Identifying local minority firms with at least \$500,000 in annual revenues or with rapid-growth potential able to receive contracts and financings, or displaced Louisiana MBEs due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. (See Item c. below).
- (2) Entering and updating viable MBE data into MBDA's Phoenix system, as well as other MBDA applications and/or databases as requested.
- (3) Cleansing and updating data entered into MBDA Applications and databases on a regular basis, no less than twice per program year.
- (4) Utilizing the data to conduct contract, procurement, and financing matchmakers.

b. Development and Maintenance of a Database/Listing of Potential Contracts, Subcontracts, and Financial Opportunities.

Develop and maintain a database/list that includes information on:

- Public (federal, state and local government) and private (domestic and foreign) sector contracting and subcontracting opportunities
 - Procuring office/source; title and description of the requirement; point of contact with name, phone and email address; the procurement method such as "full and open competition", "small business set aside", or "sources sought"; place of performance; total estimated contract value (including options); performance period; and anticipated award date.

This data must be entered into MBDA's Opportunity System.

- Financial institutions including bonding companies, banks, angel investor groups, private equity groups, and venture capitalists
 - Identifying capital resources such as standard, commercial, and alternative debt (loans, lines of credit, etc.), equity (venture capital, angel, etc.), and mezzanine financing (near equity, subordinated debt), bonds (performance and surety), and trade credit opportunities.

This data must be entered into MBDA's Capital Locator System.

Activities include, but are not limited to:

- Analyzing databases and on-line systems that provide information regarding available sources of financing and disseminating to the MBE community.
- Identifying business ownership opportunities such as franchises, licensing arrangements, and mergers and acquisitions.

- Cleansing and updating the data on a regular basis, no less than twice per program year.
- Using data to conduct contract, procurement, and financing matchmakers.

c. Establish Client Relationships

The MBOC is required to establish a relationship with MBE clients. A key component is the intake process and assessment of client capabilities.

To accomplish this work requirement the MBOC must include an intake process to determine the level of maturity of the MBE firm.

Activities under this work requirement may include, but are not limited to:

- Development of an intake process
- Assessing the capabilities of MBEs to provide goods and services and receive financing.
 - Identifying the client needs and expectations.
- Ensuring that clients have executed a written document that establishes the client relationship.

The services provided by the MBOC must be documented on MBDA's online system.

d. Brokering of Contracts, Subcontracts, and Financial Transactions for award to MBEs.

- The MBOC is required to establish a process and system whereby the buyers of goods and services are matched and brought face to face with pre-qualified MBEs. The process and system should result in verifiable documentation that establishes the direct link between the MBOC and the MBE. This brokering of contract awards entails more than giving MBEs an opportunity to participate in the bidding process. It includes working closely with MBEs to ensure that they have the information and tools required to be effective when competing for and fulfilling opportunities.
- The MBOC is required to develop a Strategic Brokering Plan for MBEs. This includes preparation of a document for the MBE that includes, but is not limited to, how the MBOC will introduce high-growth MBEs to purchasers of goods and services and providers of capital. This also includes how the MBOC will assist the MBE in the areas of joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions, matchmakers and venture capital forums.
- Referring MBEs to any of MBDA's other funded projects that specialize in specific growth assistance and/or other sources that are capable of facilitating MBE growth. MBEs so referred shall be identified in the semi-annual report to MBDA.

- Developing and maintaining strategic alliances with purchasing executives, government procurement officials, banking officials, and other similar resources to facilitate activities that result in financings.
- Conducting matchmakers, financing forums, opportunity fairs, and networking events between MBEs and opportunity providers. The MBOC must implement a system to register participants and track and document results and outcomes of these activities. It is anticipated that the MBOC's client base would be expanded by these activities.
- Providing brokering services to MBEs. Examples of brokering include: (a) Matching an MBE with a federal contracting officer that results in a contract; (b) matching an MBE to a source of financing that results in a financial transaction; (c) matching an MBE firm with another firm or company MBE that results in a joint venture or acquisition; (d) acting as the intermediary between parties that have reached an impasse in a contract or financial negotiation and providing advice or strategy that leads to a contract or financial award; (e) providing advice that leads to a documented economic benefit for the MBE clients; and (f) assisting clients by identifying, matching, and fostering strategic partners and joint ventures with firms outside of the designated service area in order to build client capacity.

These services will be required to be documented through MBDA's online system.

3. Establish Advisory Committee and Subcommittees

The MBOC must establish an advisory committee that should be comprised of public and private sector executives. The Advisory Committee is a volunteer group and a significant component of the MBOC's business development strategy. Its primary function is to provide assistance to the MBOC Executive Director in satisfying the work requirements and implementing the program. The Advisory Committee assists the MBOC staff in identifying upcoming contract and financing opportunities for MBEs and is available to minority firms for specific information on these opportunities. The MBOC should consider the following types of entities for the Advisory Committee membership: banks, bonding companies, construction companies, technology companies, angel investor companies, venture capital companies, companies representing significant industry sectors, chambers of commerce, trade organizations, contract and procurement professional organizations, federal, local and state buying officials, and MBDA's Minority Business Development Centers. The Advisory Committee should meet at least quarterly.

MBDA recommends that the MBOC establish subcommittees of the Advisory Committee focused on specific industries and the work requirements. The subcommittees should meet at least quarterly and monthly if at all possible. Applicants must provide a detailed plan regarding how the Committees and subcommittees will be established and the objectives for each. Suggested subcommittees include, but are not limited to: coaching and mentoring, matchmaking, finance, and procurement, and mergers and acquisitions.

4. Program Promotion and Advocacy

The MBOC is required to promote its activities within the business community it serves. The MBOC must advocate the use of minority businesses to the following organizations: Chambers of commerce, business and trade associations, state and local government purchasing departments, economic development and planning offices and at trade fairs and other MBE outreach events. The MBOC will market individual firms to the public and private sectors to build market awareness of the capability, talent and capacity of MBEs. To accomplish its objectives, the MBOC may use public service announcements and paid advertising.

In addition to the above, the MBOC shall carry out a plan-of-action that will include, but not be limited to, the following actions:

- Develop an MBOC marketing brochure for distribution to the public;
- Develop an MBOC website that conforms to MBDA Web Standards. (see Section F. Computer Requirements)
- Develop an individualized program description for inclusion on the MBDA Portal and the MBOC web site.
- Conduct one local Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week activity. This event is held annually in late summer or early fall, in or near the MBDA NEC. It involves full participation and collaboration with the designated MBDA NEC, including obtaining speakers, facilitating luncheons, and coordinating/hosting panel discussions. The MBOC may charge conference fees to handle the expense of the event. Applicants should indicate how such a local Med Week would be carried out and set forth the costs in the proposal. Activities would include, but not be limited to, obtaining speakers, hosting luncheons or dinners, developing signage, and preparing simple brochures.
- Attend National MED Week – This event is held annually in the fall in Washington, DC. During the National MED Week program training in accounting and finance may be offered to MBOC staff. At a minimum, travel expenditures for the MBOC's project director and (at least) one staff member must be included in the proposal.
- Attend one MBOC Training Conference. This event will be designed to bring all MBOC Executive Directors and key staff together for the purpose of discussing best practices and other topics. It is anticipated that this training would be conducted at the Chicago National Enterprise Center. At a minimum, travel expenditures for the MBOC's project director must be included in the proposal.
- Participate in the MBDA National Training Conference. This conference is designed to bring MBDA staff and the funded organizations together to discuss and listen to strategies for working effectively on behalf of MBEs. Previous conferences have been held at various locations throughout the country. At a minimum, travel expenses for the Project Director must be proposed.
- Participate in the relevant National Enterprise Center NEC Med Week Event.

5. Operational Quality

This is the work requirement in which MBDA assesses the overall management and operation of the MBOC. Performance in this area directly contributes to MBDA's overall qualitative evaluation and performance rating of the MBOC. In addition, this work requirement contributes to MBDA's ability to provide guidance and oversight and the MBOC's ability to be recognized as an effective business organization.

Under this function, the MBOC shall:

- (1) Input data associated with work requirement number 2 (see section D.2.a.(2)) into MBDA's Phoenix/Opportunity system on a weekly basis.
- (2) Execute signed work plan agreements and engagement letters with clients.
- (3) Input data into the MBOC Performance System database within seventy-two hours of receipt of the documentation from a performance based activity.
- (4) Maintain records/files for all work charged to the program (e.g. time sheets, program related expense, etc.).
- (5) Obtain written documentation of all contracts, procurement and financing transactions awarded to clients and upon requests, submit documentation to MBDA in a timely fashion.
- (6) Cooperate with MBDA in maintaining content for the Phoenix/Opportunity system, Resource Locator, Capital Locator and other available MBDA Business Applications located at www.mbda.gov.
- (7) Promote and utilize the services and resources of other MBDA programs, sponsored efforts and/or voluntary activities.
- (8) Develop an annual methodology for determining client satisfaction with MBOC services.
- (9) Adhere to MBDA's trademark and licensing requirements for all forms of communication including but not limited to signage, stationary and other MBOC related publications. Such requirements shall be provided at the post award conference. These requirements include, *but are not limited to*, specific size, location, and font of the MBDA logo.
 - Signage - Signs should be highly visible to the MBOC's clients and general public. They should be prominently displayed on entrances or doors.
 - Printed Materials – These items shall include the name of MBDA on all stationery, letterhead, brochures and other written or transmitted materials.
 - Internet Presence and Information – The MBOC is to develop and maintain an Internet presence that meets MBDA requirements (see section F. Computer Requirements, item 4).
 - Telephonic Communication - Identify the MBOC immediately upon answering the telephone. If the recipient also requires that its organization's name be given, it should be provided only after the program has been verbally identified to a caller. The MBOC Director must refer to MBDA in all advocacy and outreach efforts such as speaking engagements, news conferences, or other oral or transmitted presentations.
- (10) Comply with all reporting requirements.
- (11) Comply with all reasonable MBDA directives and requests.
- (12) Participate in a quarterly collaborative teleconference with the NEC and other MBDA funded projects.

The MBOC is not authorized to use either the Department of Commerce's official seal or the MBDA logo in any of its publications, documents or materials without specific written approval from the Department of Commerce.

E. TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

The technology tools that will be available to the MBOC may include the following:

- Phoenix/Opportunity – an electronic bid-matching system that alerts participating MBEs of contract and teaming opportunities directly via e-mail. Procurement leads are transmitted to minority firms on a targeted basis according to the company's industry classification and geographic market.
- Resource Locator – a software application that allows MBEs to search for business resources interactively on the Internet. The Resource Locator can help MBEs identify trade associations representing their industries, government licensing and permit offices, management and technical assistance providers, and a host of other resources quickly and efficiently.
- Capital Locator – an Internet-based tool that allows program consultants to inquire about, identify and locate potential financiers nearest them. This tool shall provide basic financing criteria for each identified capital resource. The tool is designed to give users the benefit of a nationwide market for identifying financing needs and products.
- Business and Market Planning – a software package designed to streamline and enhance the development of business plans, marketing plans and other strategic business documents.
- Business Analyst GIS – software operated at an individual computer workstation that provides strategic business data through a geographically-based information system. This software may be provided to select MBOCs.

MBDA strongly encourages the MBOC to use these electronic tools daily because of the significant value they add to the MBOC and minority businesses.

F. COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

MBDA requires that all award recipients meet certain requirements related to the acquisition, installation, configuration, maintenance and security of information technology (IT) assets in order to ensure seamless and productive interface between and among all grant recipients, minority-owned businesses, the MBDA Federal IT system and the public. These required assets and their configuration are hereinafter referred to as the "enterprise." The basic components of the enterprise are the desktop workstations, the server, local area network (LAN) components and a connection to the Internet.

At a minimum, each grantee shall provide one (1) desktop computer for the exclusive use of each employee delivering minority business assistance to the public under an award from MBDA. All desktop computers shall be connected to a client/server network using an Ethernet protocol enabling communication with all workstations on the award recipient's network. The server

shall have a constant, high-speed broadband Internet connection. The grantee shall ensure that each of his/her employees, to include management, administrative personnel, contractors, full-time, part-time, and non-paid (volunteer) staff have a unique electronic mail (email) address that is available to the public. Each grantee shall design, develop and maintain, in accordance with the computer requirements, a presence on the Internet's World Wide Web and shall maintain appropriate computer and network security precautions during all periods of funding by MBDA. All IT requirements, as described herein, shall be met within thirty (30) calendar days after the award.

1. Network Design:

At all locations where services are delivered to the eligible public as defined by Executive Order 11625, the recipient shall operate a Client Server Network that provides shared disk drives and the setup of print queues for a network printer(s) (if individual printers are not provided) for each staff person delivering services to the eligible public. MBDA shall, from time to time, specify certain configurations of the enterprise hardware and software to meet interface requirements.

Currently, MBDA recommends servers using an operating system that is fully compatible with Microsoft Windows 2000. Any server providing principal service to the desktops shall contain 40 or more gigabytes (GB) of hard drive space using two or more 9 GB+ disks configured appropriately to ensure data retention should one disk fail. At least one (1) Pentium IV class central processing unit (CPU) or any other server providing principal service to the desktops shall be used. Web servers, mail servers and/or servers maintained by a third party such as an Internet Service Provider (ISP) shall meet the minimum server specifications as stated herein.

2. Desktop Workstations:

All desktop systems shall not be more than two (2) calendar years old at time of award and shall contain a Pentium IV class central processing unit (CPU), operating at speeds not less than 2.13 Gigahertz (GHz). Each desktop system shall contain a hard drive with a storage capacity of at least forty (40) GB and 512 Megabytes (MB) of RAM. All desktop systems shall have installed an operating system fully compatible with Microsoft Windows 2000 or XP Professional Operating System, MS Office 2000 Professional or higher, Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.x, Anti-Virus software, software or hardware-based Firewall and Adobe Reader 7.0 or higher. Additionally, it is suggested that a full-page scanner, along with software fully compatible with Adobe Acrobat (Standard or Professional, 7.0 or higher) be installed on at least one workstation for the production of electronic document submissions.

3. Maintenance and Security:

A network map ("as-built") reflecting adherence to the computer and networking requirements set forth herein shall be maintained by the recipient for review by MBDA at any time. Each recipient shall designate and train one administrative person competent in the operation of an Operations System fully compatible with Windows 2000 network (or higher) and local area network (LAN) technology as described herein. From time to time, MBDA may require that certain software be loaded on servers and desktops. In any given year, the cost of this additional software may be \$300.00 per workstation and \$600.00 per server.

Every employee of the MBOC shall be assigned a unique username and password to access the network. Every employee shall be required to sign a written computer security agreement (A suggested format for the computer security agreement will be provided at the time of award and/or on the MBDA Portal (website)). Every manager, employee, and contractor and any other person given access to the computer system shall sign the security agreement and an original copy of the signed agreement shall be kept in the MBOC files. A photocopy of the agreement shall be sent by fax to MBDA to the attention of the MBDA CIO at: (202) 482-2678, no later than thirty (30) days after receipt of the award. All subsequent new hires and associations requiring access to the MBOC or MBDA systems shall read, understand, and sign the security agreement prior to issuance of a password. No employee shall have access to any MBDA system(s) without a signed security agreement on file at MBDA.

4. Web site:

Each recipient shall create and maintain a public web site using a unique domain/address (e.g., www.center-name.com), that will conform to MBDA web standards (A comprehensive listing of MBDA web standards can be found on the MBDA Portal). MBDA Web standards may include, *but are not limited to the following:*

- The first page (Index page) of the web site shall *clearly* identify the recipient as a Minority Business Opportunity Center funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency. The index page of the web site shall load on software fully compatible with Windows Internet Explorer 6.x browser software using a normal home computer with 56 Kb/s analog phone-line connection in less than five (5) seconds.
- The web site shall contain a "Contact" page with the names of all managers and employees, the business and mailing address of the MBOC, business phone and fax numbers and email addresses of the MBOC and employees, a statement referencing the services available at the MBOC, the hours under which the MBOC operates and a link to the MBDA homepage at www.mbda.gov.
- For purposes of electronically directing clients to the appropriate MBOC staff, the recipient's web site shall also contain a short biographical statement for each employee of the MBOC including management, contractors, part-time, full time, and non-paid (volunteer) personnel, providing services directly to the eligible public under an award from MBDA. This biographical statement shall contain:
 - the full name of the employee and
 - a brief description of the expertise of the employee to include academic degrees, certifications and any other pertinent information with respect to that employee's qualifications to deliver minority business assistance services to eligible members of the public.
- No third party advertising of commercial goods and services shall be permitted on the site. All links to websites other than federal, state or local government agencies and non-profit educational institutions must be requested, in advance and in writing, through the

MBDA CIO of the Office of Information Technology, Research and Innovation and the website must provide an external link policy or notice stating that they will be redirected to an external website. Specifically, a notice similar to the following must be provided:

The appearance of hyperlinks to other sites does not constitute endorsement by the [recipient's company name] or by the Minority Business Development Agency of these web sites or the information, products or services contained therein. Regarding such external web sites, we do not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations. These links are provided consistent with [recipient's company name] stated purpose as shown on our web site. We recommend that you review the website's information collection policy or terms and conditions to fully understand what information is collected and/or provided.

- Furthermore, the approval for the placement of such links shall not be unreasonably withheld but is subject to withdrawal if MBDA determines the linked site is unsuitable. No employee of the Program Operator, nor any other person, shall use the MBOC web site for any purpose other than that approved under the terms of the agreement between the recipient and MBDA.
- Every page of the web site shall comply with Federal standards of the American With Disabilities Act, Section 508, and be reviewed by the recipient for accuracy, currency, and appropriateness every three (3) months. In addition to this, MBDA's Section 508 Officer may occasionally review the recipient's site to ensure that the web site 508 Compliant. For additional information and guidelines, please visit www.section508.gov. Appropriate privacy notices and handicapped accessibility will be predominately featured. In general, MBDA may audit the recipient's web site and recommend changes in accordance with the guidelines set forth herein.
- The recipient will also be responsible for informing the MBDA CIO of the Office of Information Technology, Research and Innovation and to the MBDA MBOC Program Manager of any changes operating changes such as location, contact information or otherwise.

5. Time for Compliance regarding IT Requirements:

Within thirty (30) days after receipt of the award, the recipient shall report via email to the MBDA CIO of the Office of Information Technology, Research and Innovation and to the MBDA MBOC Program Manager that he/she has complied with all technical requirements as specified herein. Within thirty (30) days after receipt of the award, the recipient shall report the name, contact telephone number and email address of the Project Director, Network or System Administrator.

6. Performance System:

All required performance reporting to MBDA shall be conducted via the Internet using the Performance system to be found at a secure web site (www.mbda.gov).

7. Data Integrity:

The recipient shall take the necessary steps to ensure that all data entered into MBDA systems, and systems operated by the recipient in support of the award, or by any employee of the recipient is verified, accurate and timely.

G. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Applicants selected will be responsible for the effective management of all functions and activities supported by the Cooperative Agreement award. For the first funding period (June 1, 2006 - May 31, 2007) and second funding period (June 1, 2007 – May 31, 2008), award recipients will be required to use program performance measures as indicated in Performance Measures. The recipient will be required to report its performance in two Semi-Annual Narrative Report segments, thirty (30) calendar days after the end of each six (6) months program period. In addition, the successful applicant is required to provide a full year executive summary; entitled Year-End Narrative Report (FNR) that describes the accomplishments of the project. The FNR is due thirty (30) calendar days after the end of the program year.

The evaluation criteria for annual program performance are listed below along with each corresponding weighted value:

1. Performance Measures

a. Dollar Value of Contracts Awarded to Clients	50
b. Dollar Value of Financial Transactions Secured for Clients	20
c. Number of Clients Receiving Contracts and/or Financings	10
d. Number of Jobs Created	10
e. Operational Quality	10

The minimum goals set forth below were developed by MBDA's Office of Business Development using a quantitative formula based on the funding amounts. The Louisiana MBOC goals have been adjusted in the first program year (only) to reflect the severe economic impact and MBE displacement due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The Applicant should project its performance goals on a quarterly basis. **MBDA recognizes that economic factors in different geographic markets will result in variations between business opportunities. MBDA anticipates that responsive applicants would propose the following as minimal goals:**

Year 1: June 1, 2006 – May 31, 2007				
Location	Dollar Value of Contracts Awarded	Dollar Value of Financial Transactions Secured	Number of Clients Receiving Contracts and/or Financings	Number of Jobs Created
1. Louisiana	\$73,000,000	\$29,100,000	29	15

Year 2: June 1, 2007 – May 31, 2008

Location	Dollar Value of Contracts Awarded	Dollar Value of Financial Transactions Secured	Number of Clients Receiving Contracts and/or Financings	Number of Jobs Created
1. Louisiana	\$54,000,000	\$22,000,000	21	11

2. Performance Scoring:

Once it is operational, the MBOC will be evaluated based on its percentage achievement of its goals for performance measures a. through d., as well as item e. operational quality. For example, if the applicant establishes a contracting goal of \$100 million but achieves only \$50 million in a given year, the MBOC will receive half of the total possible points for that category (Performance Measure is worth 50 points, so the MBOC will receive 25 points for that category). Performance measure b., c., and d. will be evaluated in the same manner. The MBOC's overall performance will be held to the standards shown in section 3 below, which vary by year. An unsatisfactory performance rating at the end of any funding period or at the end of the first semi-annual reporting period may result in termination.

The MBOC is required to use good faith efforts to achieve the stated goals. High achievement in one performance measure will not excuse failure to reach other goals. Should the MBOC exceed its performance requirements prior to the end of a funding year, the MBOC is expected to maintain its standard operations, continue to provide services, and reach greater performance outcomes.

Definitions/Clarifications

1. Broker - The act of the MBOC bringing buyers and sellers together for the purpose of executing contracts, financings or other agreement leading to economic benefit. Examples of brokering include:
 - (a) Matching an MBE with a federal contracting officer that results in a contract.
 - (b) Matching an MBE to a source of financing which results in a loan.
 - (c) Matching an MBE firm with another firm or company MBE that results in a joint venture or acquisition.
 - (d) Acting as the intermediary between parties that have reached an impasse in a contract or financial negotiation and providing advice or strategy that leads to a contract or financial award.
 - (e) Providing advice that leads to a documented economic benefit to one or more MBEs.
2. Client - A MBE who has been directly served by or utilized the services of the MBOC and who acknowledges a tangible benefit received as a result of MBOC activity. Clients will always know of the MBOC's involvement in the benefit received. In the case of the Louisiana MBOC, a client is defined as a MBE that is (a) based in the state of Louisiana; (b) a displaced Louisiana MBE due to Hurricanes Katrina or Rita; (c) a MBE newly situated in

the state of Louisiana; or, (d) based in a larger service area than the state of Louisiana, if a recipient proposed to service an area beyond the state of Louisiana.

3. Documentation - A letter, form, or other clear writing that indicates that a transaction has been consummated as a result of MBOC activity. The document must contain the name of the MBOC, the name of the entity awarding the contract or financing, the name of the party receiving the contract or financing (loan), the amount of the transaction, the date of the transaction, and the activity performed by the MBOC. The writing must be signed by the MBE as the recipient of the contract or financing or revenue enhancing transaction. **The MBOC must have this written documentation before the contract or financial award is reported to MBDA.**
4. Dollar Value of Contract Awards - In order for a contract award to be considered for this performance requirement, the award must have been made as a direct result of MBOC activity. In the case of multi-year awards (base and option years), the full contract value, including option years, can be claimed in the year the contract was signed.
5. Dollar Value of Financial Transactions - The total principal value of the terms of the agreement for approved loans, equity financings, bonds, or other binding financial agreements obtained by MBEs through the activity or intervention of the MBOC. For purposes of performance measure number a, eligible financial transactions are those that have a specific dollar value, and that expand an MBE's capital base/operations, or produce some other direct commercial benefit for MBEs. Mergers and acquisitions would fall into this category. In order to be deemed complete, a financial transaction must be documented by an executed and binding agreement between the MBE and a party (financier) capable of performing its obligations under the agreement.

Regarding 4 and 5 above it is absolutely imperative that documentation as described above be present in the file before the MBOC takes credit for a contract award or financial transaction or enters transaction data into MBDA's MBOC Performance System.

6. Harvesting - defined as the MBOC taking credit for a contract or financial transaction without having performed some work directly on behalf of the MBE that helped the MBE obtain the contract or the complete the financial transaction. For example, suppose the MBOC requests that a city agency (or procurement office) send a list of all contracts it has awarded within a certain period. If no work has taken place between the MBOC and the MBE who was awarded the contract by the city agency, then the MBOC may not claim that work was done. This is considered to be harvesting.

Harvesting is also defined as an MBOC utilizing an Operator's existing client lists and claiming them as the MBOC's when the MBE has not agreed to register with the MBOC. MBOCs may utilize an Operator's membership lists to develop its clients and client relationships. In this instance the MBOC must document the relationship to show that it evolved as a result of MBOC activity and not the activity of the Operator in the course of its business. ***Harvesting is a prohibited practice. MBOCs found to employ the practice of harvesting are subject to termination for cause.***

7. Number of Jobs Created is defined as the number of new full time and/or part time employment opportunities reported on the client's payroll during the funding/program year. Persons on paid sick leave, paid holiday and paid vacations are included as employees as are salaried officers and executives of corporations. However, proprietors and partners of unincorporated business are not considered employees under this definition.
8. Operational Quality: Operational quality refers to the quality and effectiveness of the MBOC as evidenced by becoming fully operational within 30 days of the award; by the use of appropriate office space and signage; timeliness and completeness of reporting and report submittal; entry of data into the MBOC performance system; timely responsiveness to MBDA requests; and adherence to the work requirements. Failure to have staff on board within 30 days after award will result in a deduction of 10 points on the first semi annual performance assessment report and may jeopardize continuation of the award.

3. Performance Standards

The end of year performance of the MBOC for Year One of the award will be based on the following MBDA rating system:

YEAR ONE PERFORMANCE		
Minimum Required Percent of Goals Needed for Each Rating Category	Minimum Required Points Needed for Each Rating Category	Rating Categories Rating Category
100% and above*	100** & above	Outstanding
At least 90%	90 – 99	Commendable
At least 80%	80 – 89	Good
At least 75%	75 – 79	Satisfactory
Below 75%	Below 75.0	Unsatisfactory
*Not to exceed 105%		
**Not to exceed 105 Points		

The end of year performance of the MBOC for Year Two of the award will be based on the following MBDA rating system:

YEAR TWO PERFORMANCE		
Minimum Required Percent of Goals Needed for Each Rating	Minimum Required Points Needed for Each Rating	Rating Categories Rating Category

Category	Category	
100% and above*	100** & above	Outstanding
At least 90%	90 – 99	Commendable
At least 80%	80 – 89	Good
At least 77%	77 – 79	Satisfactory
Below 77%	Below 77.0	Unsatisfactory
*Not to exceed 105%		
**Not to exceed 105 Points		

Unsatisfactory performance rating at the end of any semi-annual reporting period may result in termination.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Award Period and Funding Availability

The total award period is two years: June 1, 2006 – May 31, 2007 and June 1, 2007 – May 31, 2008. MBDA anticipates that applications will be processed within forty-five (45) days from the date of publication of this notice, with an approximate award start date of June 1, 2006.

Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have been appropriated for FY 2006 for the first funding period; however funds have not yet been appropriated for FY 2007 for the second funding period. In no event will MBDA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if this program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of other agency or legislative priorities.

Financial assistance awards under this program competition will be \$415,000 (year 1) and MBDA anticipates \$260,000 for year 2 in Federal funding (subject to availability of FY 2007 appropriations). MBDA will select recipients for MBOCs based on the following criteria in the applicant's defined service area: 1) the size of the minority population, 2) the density of MBEs with annual revenues of at least \$500,000 or rapid-growth potential or displaced Louisiana MBEs due to Hurricanes Katrina or Rita, 3) the presence of significant federal and commercial contracting and financing opportunities, 4) the size of the market, and 5) the need for MBDA resources.

Applicants are expected to set forth demographic data as a part of applicant's rationale for federal funds requested. Applicants must submit project plans and budgets for each of the two funding periods. Projects will be funded for no more than one year at a time. Project proposals accepted for funding will not compete for funding in the subsequent second budget period. Second year funding will depend upon satisfactory performance the preceding year by the award recipient. All funding periods are subject to the availability of funds to support the continuation of the project, and Department of Commerce (DoC) and MBDA priorities. Second year will be granted at the sole discretion of MBDA and the DoC. Publication of this notice does not obligate

MBDA or DoC to award any specific cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds.

B. Type of Funding Instrument/MBDA Involvement

Financial assistance awards in the form of Cooperative Agreements will be used to fund this program. MBDA's substantial involvement with recipients will include performing the following duties to further the Program objectives:

1. Post-Award Conference

MBDA shall conduct a post-award conference training session for all new program operators and their executive directors to ensure that each MBOC has a clear understanding of the program and its components. The conference will: (1) Provide an MBDA Directory of Business Resources; (2) Orient MBOC staff; (3) Explain program reporting requirements and procedures; (4) Identify available resources that can enhance the capabilities of the MBOC; and (5) Provide detailed information about MBDA and its business resources.

It is anticipated that this conference would be held not later than thirty (30) days after award in the appropriate regional office.

2. Training

MBDA shall conduct various qualitative training sessions for the MBOC staff including training on the MBOC Performance reporting system. The training sessions are designed (in part) to improve communications, understandings, service delivery, performance and reporting. In addition to the training identified above, the listed training sessions below are designated for the 2006 funding year. Anticipated training sessions for the 2007 funding year will consist of items a through d and f (see below). The MBOC shall budget for appropriate staff participation, travel and expenditures for the following except for MBOC Performance System Training, which will be conducted telephonically.

- (a) Post award conference(s) held in the appropriate regional offices;
- (b) Local MED Week event in or near MBDA NEC;
- (c) MBDA National Training Conference;
- (d) National MED Week conference held in Washington, DC;
- (e) MBOC Training Conference;
- (f) MBOC Performance System Training.

Training sessions are offered each funding year based on the availability of funds. Locations are subject to change.

3. Provide Resources, Networking, Outreach and Promotion Activities and Events.

- a. Provide access to business information systems;
- b. Sponsor one national training conference

- c. Expand the Phoenix data bank of minority-owned firms by requiring other MBDA-funded programs to provide entries;
- d. Promote business opportunity information using the Capital Locator, Resource Locator, and Phoenix / Opportunity system on the MBDA Portal located at www.mbda.gov;
- e. Publicize procurement and contract opportunities using the Phoenix/Opportunity system located at www.mbda.gov;
- f. Promote special events as appropriate; and
- h. Provide an MBOC Handbook to serve as a resource for understanding the MBOC program and its operational, reporting, documentation, performance verification and monitoring requirements.

4. Project Monitoring and Reporting

MBDA will systematically monitor the performance of the MBOC, as provided under the operational quality performance measure. This monitoring includes regular review of data entered into the Performance reporting system, assessment of the end of the second quarter progress report, and an on-site review of the MBOC files to verify MBOC performance/claims. MBDA will have discussions with the MBOC to assess each MBOC's effectiveness in serving the needs of its respective minority business communities. MBDA will then provide a report of findings and recommendations for improvement as a result of evaluations and monitoring visits. MBDA will approve of key MBOC staff and respond in a timely manner to correspondence requesting MBDA action.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

For-profit entities (including sole-proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations), and non-profit organizations, state and local government entities, American Indian Tribes, and educational institutions are eligible to operate MBOCs.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements

Cost sharing of at least 15% is required for year 1 and 30% is required for year 2. Cost sharing is the portion of the project cost not borne by the Federal Government. Applicants must meet this requirement in (1) cash contributions; (2) non-cash applicant contributions; and/or (3) third party in-kind contributions. Bonus points will be awarded for cost sharing exceeding 30 percent (years 1 and 2) that is applied to the MBOC. Applicants must provide a detailed explanation of how the cost-sharing requirement will be met. Cost sharing must be fully documented; third-party in-kind contributions require original letters of support.

While not a program requirement, the MBOC may charge client fees for brokering services rendered. Client fees may be used towards meeting cost share requirements. Client fees applied directly to the award's cost sharing requirement must be used in the furtherance of the program objectives. (See Section I.D.2.d for the brokering services for which a fee may be charged.)

IV. APPLICATION and SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Address to Request Application Package

Paper applications may be obtained by contacting the specified MBDA National Enterprise Center (NEC) for the geographic service area (Section I, B; see also Section VII, Agency Contacts) in which the project will be located. Standard forms may be obtained by (1) contacting MBDA as described above; or (2) by downloading Standard forms at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants> or <http://www.grants.gov>, and Department of Commerce forms at www.doc.gov/forms. If an applicant files electronically, all application materials and forms are available on the Grants.gov website.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applications may be submitted electronically or in paper format. Instructions for submitting electronically are posted at www.Grants.gov. Paper applications must be submitted by delivering an original and two copies to the listed submission address as set forth below in Section IV.F.

A completed application consists of: Program and Budget Narratives (for each funding period); Standard Forms 424, Application for Federal Assistance; 424A, Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs; and 424B, Assurances-Non-Construction Programs; SF-LLL (Rev. 7-97)(if applicable); Department of Commerce Forms, CD-346, Applicant for Funding Assistance; and CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying and required attachments.

1. Proposal Format

The proposal should be structured to contain the following headings and information, in the following order:

a. Table of Contents

b. Program Narrative

(1) Applicant Capability – In addition to the applicant's narrative discussion of this evaluation criterion (see Section V.A.1), include the following specific documentation as attachments:

- (a) Corporations: A copy of the Articles of Incorporation, by-laws and Board of Directors resolution regarding capacity to report data to MBDA; and for non-profits: IRS 501(c) (3) non-profit letter or other evidence of non-profit status.
- (b) Partnerships: Copy of business license and a copy of signed partnership agreement.
- (c) Sole Proprietorship: Copy of business license or other legal documentation that demonstrates legal formation.
- (d) State and Local Government: Governing body resolution regarding capacity to report data to MBDA.

- (e) Organizational background information describing the Applicant's experience in working with minority firms, delivery of applicable services (as outlined in this Notice), and client outcomes as determined by the awards of contracts or financings.
- (f) Two (2) letters of support from minority firms that the Applicant has previously assisted.
- (g) A Board of Directors (or other governing body) resolution confirming that the Applicant has the legal capacity to track, gather information, and provide timely reports related to MBEs.
- (h) A sample of a Strategic Brokering Plan, outlining the type of activities the MBOC would take to assist a client in obtaining procurements or financings.

(2) Resources – In addition to the applicant's narrative discussion of this evaluation criterion (see Section V.A. 2), include the following specific documentation as attachments:

- (a) A resume describing the qualifications of the Executive Director, along with an official college transcript, as appropriate. The Executive Directors and key staff must have significant experience in business development, brokering transactions, making presentations to high level corporate executives, and coaching. An MBA degree is preferred. Commitment letters for the Executive Director must also be provided.
- (b) Position descriptions and qualification standards for all staff. Staff backgrounds should reflect significant experience in working with minority firms.
- (c) Commitment letters from contracting and financing entities willing to work with the applicant to award contracts and financing.
- (d) Commitment letters from organizations that will assist the applicant to meet the cost share requirements. These resources can include such items as facilities, equipment, voluntary staff time and space, and financial resources.

(3) Techniques and Methodologies - The applicant's narrative discussion (see Section V.A.3) in its proposal shall include:

- (a) A specific plan-of-action detailing how the MBOC will be established.
- (b) A detailed discussion of applicant's methodology for accomplishing the Work requirements contained in this notice and an implementation strategy with timelines.
- (c) How the applicant will integrate the work requirements with the MBOC Program performance measures.
- (d) The proposed service area. This area should be as wide as is reasonable and practicable.
- (e) Analysis of the demographic and business data of the proposed service area to confirm the appropriateness of the area. Such analysis should include the size of the minority population and density of MBEs with revenues of \$500,000 or rapid-growth

potential or displaced Louisiana MBEs due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the applicant's defined service area. The presence of significant federal and commercial contracting and financing opportunities, the size of the market, and the need for MBDA resources in the applicant's defined service area should also be discussed.

- (f) A project plan for each of the two funding periods detailing what the Applicant will do to accomplish the Work Requirements during each year.

(4) Costs/Budget – Applicant must detail all costs required on Forms 424 and 424A including costs for appropriate staff participation, travel, and expenditures for the following:

1. Post Award Conference – 1-2 day event in or near the MBDA NEC.
2. Local MED Week – 1-2 day event in or near the MBDA NEC.
3. MBDA National Conference – 3-4 days event location to be determined.
4. National MED Week – 3-4 days event in Washington, DC, for the Executive Director and at least one staff member.
5. MBOC National Training Conference – 3-4 day event.

A Budget Narrative for each program year (total of one year, nine months) detailing all costs must be provided. MBDA anticipates that 75% of the Federal funding share must be allocated to key staff, such as the Executive Director and senior business development persons. Provide an explanation of how the cost-sharing requirement will be met, including whether client fees for brokering will be charged and applied to the cost share. Applicants choosing to charge fees should set forth a fee schedule in their proposals.

c. Forms

Forms include Standard Forms 424, Application for Federal Assistance; 424A, Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs; and 424B, Assurances-Non-Construction Programs; SF-LLL (Rev. 7-97)(if applicable); Department of Commerce Forms, CD-346, Applicant for Funding Assistance (when filing electronically, include CD-346 as an attachment as described below); and CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying.

d. Attachments

Include the identified attachments above in sections IV.B.1.b(1) and (2). (Note: The CD-346 is not available within the Grant.gov application package for electronic filing. However, it can be found at www.doc.gov/forms. The form can be completed and attached to the application. An original signature copy of the CD-346 will be required before an award will be made to the successful applicant.)

2a. Rejection of Applications/Deduction of Points for Missing Information – Paper Submission

Failure to include, by the deadline, a signed, original SF-424 with the paper application will result in the application being rejected and returned to the applicant. Failure to sign and submit THE REMAINING FORMS with the paper application by the deadline will automatically cause an application to lose two (2) points in the overall score. Failure to submit other documents or information may also adversely affect an applicant's overall score. MBDA shall not accept any changes, additions, revisions or deletions to competitive applications after the closing date for receiving applications, except through a formal negotiation process. MBDA may contact applicants for additional clarifications.

2b. Rejection of Applications – Electronic Submission

Failure to include, by the deadline, a complete application as described above, will result in the application being rejected by Grants.gov. [Note: An electronic application cannot be submitted at Grants.gov unless all required fields on all required forms are completed.] Failure to submit other documents or information by the deadline, which does not result in the rejection of an application by Grants.gov, may affect an applicant's overall score. MBDA shall not accept any changes, additions, revisions or deletions to competitive applications after the closing date for receiving applications, except through a formal negotiation process, which may include allowing more time due to system problems at Grants.gov beyond the control of the applicant. MBDA may contact applicants for additional clarifications.

C. Submission Dates and Times

The closing date for receipt of applications is **May 11, 2006**. Completed applications must be received by MBDA **no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time** at the address in section F. The due date and time is the same for electronic submissions as it is for paper submissions. The date that applications will be deemed to have been submitted electronically shall be the date and time received at Grants.gov. Applicants should save and print the proof of submission they receive from Grants.gov. **Electronic applications received after the closing date and time will not be considered unless as noted below.**

- If an applicant experiences transmission or other technical problems, it should first document the problem. This can be done by (a) printing an email or similar message from Grants.gov, or (b) printing a dated image of the computer screen where the problem is noticed. In addition, the applicant should resolve the problem with the technical staff of Grants.gov by calling 1-800-518-4726 or by email at support@grants.gov.
- In the event of system problems, the Department will accept only the application that the applicant was in the process of transmitting. If the Department decides to allow more time for an applicant to transmit its application, due to system problems beyond the applicant's control, the applicant shall submit only the application as it was prepared and ready to transmit by the deadline. In such an event, the applicant shall re-transmit its application promptly and shall not use the extra time to change its application. Otherwise, the Department will reject the application as untimely.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.”

E. Funding Restrictions

Construction is not an allowable activity under the MBOC Program.

Management Fee: For-profit as well as not-for-profit organizations may negotiate a management fee but such fees shall not exceed 7% of the total estimated direct costs (Federal plus Non-Federal) for the proposed award.

Indirect Costs: The total dollar amount of the indirect costs proposed in an application under this program must not exceed the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by a Federal agency prior to the proposed effective date of the award or 100 percent of the total proposed direct costs dollar amount in the application, whichever is less.

F. Other Submission Requirements

1 a) Paper Submission - If Mailed: If the application is mailed/shipped overnight by the applicant or its representative, one (1) signed original plus two (2) copies of the application must be submitted. Completed application packages must be mailed to:

Office of Business Development – MBOC Program
Office of Executive Secretariat, HCHB, Room 5063
Minority Business Development Agency
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

U.S. Department of Commerce delivery policies for Federal Express, UPS, and DHL overnight services require the packages to be sent to the address above.

1 b) Paper Submission - If Hand-Delivered: If the application is hand-delivered by the applicant or his/her representative, one (1) signed original plus two (2) copies of the application must be delivered to:

U.S. Department of Commerce
MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
Office of Business Development – MBOC Program (extension 1940)
HCHB, Room 1874
Entrance #10
15th Street, NW
Washington, DC
(Between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues)

U.S. Department of Commerce “hand-delivery” policies state that Federal Express, UPS, and

DHL overnight services submitted to the address listed above (Entrance #10) cannot be accepted. These policies should be taken into consideration when utilizing their services. MBDA will not accept applications that are submitted by the deadline but rejected due to Departmental hand-delivery policies. The applicant must adhere to these policies for its application to be considered for award.

2) Electronic Submission: Applicants are encouraged to submit their proposal electronically at <http://www.Grants.gov>. Electronic submissions should be made in accordance with instructions available at Grants.gov. MBDA strongly recommends that applicants not wait until the deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated and applicants will be selected based on the following criteria. An application must receive at least 70% of the total points available for each evaluation criterion, in order for the application to be considered for funding.

The maximum total points that can be earned is 105 including the bonus points for related non-federal cost sharing as described below.

1. Applicant Capability (30 points).

The applicant's proposal will be evaluated with respect to the applicant's experience and expertise in providing the work requirements listed. Specifically, the proposals will be evaluated as follows:

- MBE Community – Experience and knowledge of the local minority business sector and established working relationships with buying organizations. This factor will be evaluated on whether or not the applicant has an established presence in the proposed geographic service area. Established presence is defined to mean that the applicant has had an office in the geographic service area for a minimum of three (3) years preceding this announcement. In light of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the definition for established presence is amended to include entities in operation since the beginning of 2003 (minimum) through August 2005 (10 points);
- Business Acumen - experience in and knowledge of coaching and mentoring techniques related to serving rapid growth-potential minority firms (3 points);
- Financing - experience in and knowledge of brokering techniques and facilitating large financial transactions (5 points);
- Procurements and Contracting - experience in and knowledge of the public and private sector contracting opportunities and gaining access to the buyers to facilitate and broker large deals (5 points);

- **Financing Networks** – Knowledge of the resources and professional relationships within the corporate, banking and investment community that can be beneficial to minority-owned firms (2 points);
- **Experience and knowledge of particular industries and ability to gain access to industry leaders within the geographic service area** (5 points).

2. Resources (25 points).

The applicant's proposal will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Key Staff** – Discuss the experience of the staff that will operate the MBOC. In particular, an assessment will be made to determine whether key staff has the experience in working with high level key decision makers to broker and facilitate large dollar contracts and financial transactions, and coach and mentor MBEs. Proposed staff will be assessed to determine if they possess the expertise in utilizing information systems as contemplated under the heading entitled, "Computer Requirements" (10 points);
- **Resources** - Discuss what resources will be utilized to accomplish the work requirements (not included as part of the cost-sharing arrangement); an assessment will be made to evaluate how well the plan establishes and maintains the network of resources discussed in the work requirements section. Discuss how the Advisory Committee and subcommittees will be recruited and what their role will be. Discuss how the committees will contribute to the performance measures (10 points);
- **Equipment** – An assessment will be conducted to evaluate how well the plan fulfills the computer hardware and software requirements (5 points).

3. Techniques and Methodologies (25 points).

The applicant's proposal will be evaluated as follows:

- **Performance Measures** -Relate each performance measure to the financial, information and market resources available in the applicant's defined service area and how the goals will be met. Specific attention should be placed on the Dollar Value of Contract Awards and Financial Transactions (as described under Definitions). Minimum goals should be based on the availability of federal procurement dollars in the service area. The applicant should also consider existing market conditions and its strategy to achieve the goal (10 points);
- **Plan of Action** – Provide specific detail on how the applicant will start operations, including how the Advisory Committees and Subcommittees will be formed. The plan should include a detailed discussion of the nature of the advisory role and how the committee will work with Center staff to accomplish program objectives.

Program Operators have thirty (30) days to become fully operational after an award is made. Fully operational means that the primary office and (if applicable) secondary or

satellite office(s) are open, all staff is hired, all signs are up, all items of furniture and equipment are in place and operational, all stationery forms are developed and the Center is ready to open its doors to the public. Failure to have all staff on board within 30 days after award will result in a deduction of 10 points on the first semi-annual performance assessment report and may jeopardize continuation of the award (5 points);

- Work Requirements Execution Plan - The applicant will be evaluated on how it plans to execute the Work Requirements (including implementation timelines) and how effectively and efficiently all staff will be used. Applicants should include a description for using an intra and interstate approach, depending on the geographic service area, for accomplishing the work requirements (5 points);
- Appropriateness of Applicant Defined Service Area - The applicant will be evaluated based on the following: the size of the minority population and density of MBEs with revenues of \$500,000 or rapid-growth potential or displaced Louisiana MBEs due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the applicant's defined service area. The presence of significant federal and commercial contracting and financing opportunities, the size of the market, and the need for MBDA resources in the applicant's defined service area should also be discussed (5 Points).

4. Proposed Budget and Supporting Budget Narrative (20 points).

The applicant must provide separate budget narratives for each year. The applicant is reminded that the non-federal cost share is only 15% for year 1 and 30% for year 2. The applicant's proposal will be evaluated on the following sub-criteria:

- Reasonableness, allowability and allocability of costs (5 points).
MBDA anticipates that 75% of the funding level will be allocated to key staff, such as the Executive Director and senior business development persons.
- Proposed cost sharing of 15 percent is required for year 1 and 30 percent is required for year 2 and must be documented, including whether client fees for brokering will be charged and applied to the cost share. Applicants choosing to charge fees should set forth a fee schedule in their proposals (5 points).
- Performance based Budget. (10 points) Discuss how the budget is related to the accomplishment of the work requirements and the Performance measures. Provide a budget narrative that clearly shows the connections.
- Non-Federal cost-sharing exceeding 30 percent for both years 1 and 2 (5 bonus points).

Proposals with cost-sharing for both year 1 and year 2 which exceeds 30% that is allocated to the MBOC will be awarded bonus points on the following scale: every whole percentage point over 30 percent will be awarded one bonus point up to a maximum of 5 points.

Note, proposals will be assessed bonus points only if the non-federal cost-share exceeds 30% for both years 1 and 2. Year 1 minimum non-federal cost share is 15%. Proposals allocating less than 30% will not be eligible for bonus points.

Applicants must provide a detailed explanation of how the cost-sharing requirement will be met. Cost sharing must be fully documented; third-party in-kind contributions require original letters of commitment.

B. Selection Procedures

Prior to the formal paneling process, each application will receive an initial screening to ensure that all required forms, signatures and documentation are present. Each application will receive an independent, objective review by a panel qualified to evaluate the applications submitted. MBDA anticipates that the review panel will be made up of at least three independent reviewers (all Federal employees) who will evaluate all applications based on the above evaluation criteria. Each reviewer will provide a score for each proposal. The National Director of MBDA makes the final recommendation to the Department of Commerce Grants Officer regarding the funding of applications, taking into account the following selection criteria:

1. Evaluations and rankings of the independent review panel;
2. Size of proposed service area. Applicants are encouraged to propose as large a service area as possible, which may extend beyond the defined area of the State of Louisiana;
3. The following funding priorities:
 - a. Having an existing or recent client base that can be utilized for brokering contract and financial transactions;
 - b. Having the ability to establish an MBOC that has an Industry specific(s) focus and that demonstrates the utility of economic clusters including, but not limited to, aerospace, manufacturing, construction, financial services, IT and /or automotive industries;
 - c. Having the ability to assist in economic recovery following natural disasters through available economic opportunities;
 - d. Having the ability to facilitate joint ventures and strategic partnerships between clients and firms outside of the designated service area;
4. Proposal for a secondary or satellite office(s) accessible to residents of Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and
5. Availability of funding.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notices

The notice of award (CD-450) is signed by the Department of Commerce Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is provided by Federal Express to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

MBDA will notify unsuccessful applicants, in writing, by postal mail. Those proposals that are not ultimately selected for funding will be destroyed, unless requested by the applicant, in writing, within thirty (30) days of notification.

B. Unsuccessful Competition

On occasion, competitive solicitations or competitive panels may produce less than optimum results, such as competition resulting in the receipt of no applications or competition resulting in all unresponsive applications received. If the competition results in only one application, it may or may not require additional action from MBDA depending upon the competitive history of the area, the quality of application received, and the time and cost limits involved. In the event that any or all of these conditions arise, MBDA shall take the most time and cost-effective approach available that is in the best interest of the Government. This includes, but is not limited to: (1) Re-competition or (2) Re-Paneling or (3) Negotiation.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389). You may obtain a copy of this notice by contacting the agency contact under Section VII or by going to the website at: www.acess.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html.

D. Reporting

Financial reports are to be submitted to the Department of Commerce Grants Office on a quarterly basis. A final financial report is due within 90 days after expiration of the award. Performance (Semi-Annual Narrative) reports are to be submitted to the Federal Program Officer within thirty (30) days after the end of the first and second semi-annual reporting periods, as described in Section I.G of this FFO. A Year-End Narrative or final performance report is due thirty (30) days after the end of each program year.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

1. Office of Business Development, 14th and Constitution Avenues, Room 5075, Washington DC 20230.

Contact: Efrain Gonzalez, Program Manager at 202-482-1940.

2. Dallas National Enterprise Center (NEC), 1100 Commerce Street, Suite 726, Dallas, TX 75242. This region covers the states of Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.

Contact: John Iglehart, Regional Director, Dallas NEC at 214-767-8001.

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

- **Indirect Costs.** The indirect cost policies contained in OMB Circulars A-21, A-87 and A-122 will apply to MBDA awards for its business development programs. Indirect costs are those costs proposed for common or joint objectives and which cannot be readily identified with a particular cost objective. Therefore, if the MBDA award is to be the sole source of support for the applicant organization, all costs are direct costs and no indirect costs should be proposed.

Organizations with indirect costs that do not have an established indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by a Federal agency may still propose indirect costs. For the recipient to recover indirect costs, however, the proposed budget must include a line item for such costs. Also, the recipient must prepare and submit a cost allocation plan and indirect cost rate proposal as required by applicable OMB circulars (A-21, A-87 and A-122). The allocation plan and the rate proposal must be submitted to the Department's Office of Acquisition Management within 90 days from the effective date of the proposed award.

- **Audit Costs.** Audits shall be performed in accordance with audit requirements contained in Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations, revised June 27, 2003. OMB Circular A-133 requires that non-profit organizations, government agencies, Indian tribes and educational institutions expending \$500,000 or more in federal funds during a one-year period conduct a single audit in accordance with guidelines outlined in the circular. Applicants are reminded that other audits may be conducted by the Office of Inspector General.
- **Limitation of Liability.** In no event will the MBDA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if the MBOC program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of Agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige the Agency to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- **Sign all required forms in blue ink. Copies must be signed.**
- **Double-check all budget arithmetic.** All figures must add-up correctly to the nearest dollar,
- **All proposed costs must be accompanied by written narrative.** Read the budget narrative requirements in the application kit carefully. All costs must be explained in writing.

- **Applicants should use proper care when preparing proposals.** Correction of errors in mathematics or failure to put numbers in the proper place on the forms is time-consuming and creates delay and may jeopardize an award. If assistance is required, please contact the NEC Office in your geographic area.
- **The Federal amount is not negotiable!** The full amount of Federal funds designated for the award must be used in its entirety in the proposal. Applicants must submit project plans and budgets for each of the two funding periods.